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THE BULLETIN

OF THE CENTER FOR CHILDREN'S BOOKS

June 1993
Vol. 46 No. 10



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OF THE CENTER FOR CHILDREN'S BOOKS

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EXPLANATION OF CODE SYMBOLS USED WITH REVIEWS

*	Asterisks denote books of special distinction.
R	Recommended.
Ad	Additional book of acceptable quality for collections needing more material in the area.
M	Marginal book that is so slight in content or has so many weaknesses in style or format that it should be given careful consideration before purchase.
NR	Not recommended.
SpC	Subject matter or treatment will tend to limit the book to specialized collections.
SpR	A book that will have appeal for the unusual reader only. Recommended for the special few who will read it.

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THE BIG PICTURE

Raven: A Trickster Tale from the Pacific Northwest

adapted and illustrated by Gerald McDermott

"Raven came. All the world was in darkness. The sky above was in darkness. The waters below were in darkness. Men and women lived in the dark and cold. Raven was sad for them. He said, 'I will search for light.'" In frugal, measured phrases, Gerald McDermott describes Raven's flight to the lodge of the Sky Chief. There Raven changes shape to become a pine needle floating down into the water, which the daughter of the Sky Chief drinks. Reborn as a child who delights the Sky Chief, Raven begs for the sun, and—once it's uncovered from its box within a box within a box—steals it and throws it into the sky.

This Native American myth echoes with imagery of getting inside things in order to get things outside, a theme dynamically tuned to the reversible role of a trickster-hero. And like all trickster heroes, Raven has a savior aspect. The parallels with Christian theology include a virgin birth, with a redeemer who gives light to the world. Raven appears as a painted-wood totem superimposed on natural backgrounds, just as stories are superimposed on life to explain and pattern it. McDermott's seasoning as an illustrator shows in the understated humor here; Native American lore translated into picture book format is too often reverentially serious. The brilliantly patterned Raven-child, taking his first steps and throwing a temper tantrum to get what he wants, contrasts vividly with the foggy gouache landscapes, in themselves a departure from the artist's characteristic sharp edges. Primary blues and reds dominate the spreads until Raven finds the sun, whereupon pale shades begin to dawn toward a climactic yellow glow so intense that the sun comes as a white-hot surprise.

Raven's transformations are cleverly devised by the coordination of visual image, page design, and wording. To show a progression of events across a double spread without confusing young viewers is always a technical challenge: Raven rolls the sun-ball across the floor in the verso ("Ga! Ga!"), begins changing into a bird in the first half of the facing picture ("Ha! Ha!"), and flies full fledged with the sun in the right-hand segment ("Caw! Caw!"). Each panel deepens in hue and moves the central figure higher on the page, with textual blocks used for balance.

Calmer in tone and rounder in shapes than McDermott's fast-paced, angular *Zomo the Rabbit: A Trickster Tale from West Africa* (BCCB 9/92), this has the same kind of introductory note giving some background on the story without naming any specific tribal groups or citing printed sources, which would have been helpful in assessing the adaptation. This is a common problem in evaluating picture book folklore, a fast-growing genre in children's literature; five of the thirteen reviewed in this issue lack adequate source notes. As a knowledgeable disciple of Joseph Campbell and an innovative creator of picture books, McDermott can contribute more of what he knows within the admittedly limited space of an authorial note.

What's impressive about his *Raven* is the respectful simplicity of the telling and the clarity of the graphic interpretation. Spare enough verbally to use with young listeners, whom he involves with occasional questions ("Who do you think the child was? . . . What do you think the ball was? . . . And why do the people always feed Raven?"), and spare enough visually to succeed with groups, this is like the very nest of boxes that holds the sun—there's more revealed with each opening of the book.

Betsy Hearne, Editor



NEW BOOKS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

AASENG, NATHAN *The Locker Room Mirror: How Sports Reflect Society.* Walker, 1993 136p illus. with photographs

Library ed. ISBN 0-8027-8218-3 \$15.85

Trade ed. ISBN 0-8027-8217-5 \$14.95

R Gr. 6-9

As his title suggests, Aaseng views the myriad problems of amateur and professional sports as reflections of the same problems in American culture as a whole. He devotes chapters to drug use, violence, cheating, race discrimination, sex discrimination, and money, generally concluding that social pressures and expectations from without are what cause the problems within: "Violence in sports is nothing more than a reflection of our society. Our games will continue to be as violent as we want them to be." (The second sentence does not necessarily follow the first, a conundrum Aaseng does not explore.) While Ann Weiss' *Money Games*, reviewed below, is more deeply argued, Aaseng's book has broad coverage, is simply written, and is geared to a younger reading level. Its topical organization, open format, and black-and-white photos makes Aaseng's book more browsable than Weiss', and an index and bibliography increase the term-paper possibilities. RS

ADA, ALMA FLOR *My Name Is María Isabel*; tr. from the Spanish by Ana M. Cerro; illus. by K. Dyble Thompson. Atheneum, 1993 57p

ISBN 0-689-31517-1 \$12.95

Ad Gr 3-4

María Isabel, nine, is dismayed when she changes school and her new teacher changes her name: "We already have two Marías in this class. Why don't we call you Mary instead?" María Isabel has been taught to obey her teachers, but she misses her own name and the connection it gives her to the two grandmothers for whom she is named. This is a potent twist on the new-school story, but the book is too abbreviated to engage much emotional response to María's dilemma. We're told, for example, that María's mother goes out one day to look for a job, and later we see that she has one, but there seems to be some story missing in between. At another point, a new character is introduced as if readers have already met her and disappears as quickly as she came: "One day, Suni Paz came to the school," and that's it for Suni Paz. María finally gets her own name back when she writes a composition on "My Greatest Wish," and the teacher realizes her mistake. This resolution seems a bit pat, but kids will still enjoy María's reclamation of her name,

culture, and identity. While the occasional pencil illustrations are stiff and overliteral, the book is short and easy to read, and it will be accessible to readers just starting chapter books. RS

AHLBERG, JANET *The Bear Nobody Wanted*; written and illus. by Janet and Allan Ahlberg. Viking, 1993 142p
ISBN 0-670-83982-5 \$15.00 M Gr. 4-6

Due to an accident at birth, the titular hero has a disdainful look sewed upon his stuffed little face, and his resulting attitude problem leads to a sorry existence: "For how a bear looked, especially when he was new, was how he *was*." The book follows the bear through various abandonments and rescues, and the rollercoaster ups and downs get a bit fatiguing. Peppered with parenthetical knowing asides, the story seems to have one eye winking at an adult audience and on the whole appeals to a sophisticated world-weariness, as in the narrator's comment about the bear's expectation for affection: "(What an optimist he was.)" Unlike Ahlberg's *Ten in a Bed* (BCCB 9/89), which fractures fairy tales in a way that's funny for both kids and adults, this book has a sour, arch sensibility in which wit triumphs over humor and won't mean much to the audience for talking toys. RS

ASKOUNIS, CHRISTINA *The Dream of the Stone*. Farrar, 1993 [304p]
ISBN 0-374-31877-8 \$16.00
Reviewed from galleys Ad Gr. 7-10

Sarah's parents have been killed in a plane crash while on their way home from visiting Sarah's older brother Sam, a science genius who's gotten himself involved in a mysterious organization called CIPHER. And we're off and running in this science fantasy that features time and space travel via a special mirror, a wise crone who keeps popping up in various guises, and a handsome Gypsy boy who helps Sarah on her quest: to return a magic Stone to its rightful place in the Door. CIPHER, it turns out, is just one instrument of the Umbra, an evil shadow that seeks to control the universe; it is opposed by the forces of Light, led by the Amarantha, who in turn reports to the One Whose Name Cannot Be Spoken. Although the book seems derivative of Madeleine L'Engle's work and has an overcrowding of ideas and devices, Askounis knows how to pace a story, so that the urgency of Sarah's quest has a momentum that sweeps it through the mechanical plot. Fans of L'Engle, John Christopher, and other adventure-oriented SF writers will find much to enjoy here, and the eerie cover art will pull them right in. RS

BANKS, LYNNE REID *The Mystery of the Cupboard*; illus. by Tom Newsom. Morrow, 1993 246p
Library ed. ISBN 0-688-12635-9 \$13.88
Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-12138-1 \$13.95 Ad Gr. 5-7

Followers of Omri's last two adventures with his miniature toy figures, brought to life in a magic cupboard, will have to survive a complicated and melodramatic tale of family history before the mystery of the cupboard is revealed. It seems Omri's grandmother in the pre-World War I years was appalled when her younger sister Jessica Charlotte left home to tread the music hall stage and to bear a son without benefit of marriage. Jessica Charlotte's outcast status led to jealousy, theft, death, and the sisters' irrevocable separation. Left only with her embittered son, who lost his metal toy business to the post-war plastic industry, Jessica Charlotte instructed

him to build a cabinet and mentally deposit all his bitterness and disappointments into it. Imbued also with Jessica Charlotte's extrasensory powers, the cabinet brings to life some of her son's miniature figures, who befriend Jessica Charlotte in her old age. Will readers of the series be disappointed that the cabinet was not really found in an alley by Omri's older brother, that neither the old nor the new miniature people come alive in this book until chapter fifteen, or that Omri's father discovers the secret of the cupboard in the final pages? Devoted fans will endure and rejoice that the next installment is obviously on its way, but the uninitiated will be lost and wonder what the fuss is all about. Studied and literal pencil illustrations appear throughout. ELIZABETH HUNTOON

BERNHARD, EMERY, ad. *Spotted Eagle & Black Crow: A Lakota Legend*; illus. by Durga Bernhard. Holiday House, 1993 32p
ISBN 0-8234-1007-2 \$15.95 R 5-7 yrs

A dramatic story of two warriors who love the same woman shows one, Spotted Eagle, respecting the laws of both nature and society, first when he refuses to kill two eaglets and later when he refuses to kill his rival, the brother who had left him stranded to die on a ledge by the nest. The tale has a number of powerful images, including Spotted Eagle's flight with the birds and Black Crow's death at the hands of enemy raiders, that are sometimes supported by the art but at other times seem overwhelmed by it. The paintings feature doll-like figures, pastel hues, and traditional Native American motifs framing a text in various shapes. This makes for compositions whose complex graphic design can become distracting despite their careful crafting and rich effects. The author notes the background of the tale, its source, and the alterations he's made. Read this one aloud in conjunction with European variants of the good and bad brothers (the Grimms' "Water of Life," for instance), or, for that matter, Cain and Abel. BH

BIRDSEYE, TOM, ad. *Soap! Soap! Don't Forget the Soap!: An Appalachian Folktale*; illus. by Andrew Glass. Holiday House, 1993 32p
ISBN 0-8234-1005-6 \$14.95 Ad 4-6 yrs

Presumably based on the popular variant "Soap, Soap, Soap" collected by Richard Chase in *Grandfather Tales* (there's no source note), this follows the fate of a forgetful little boy who is sent to town for some soap but inadvertently offends a raft of folks along the way. Whatever he repeats from one makes the next one mad. Birdseye has named the character Plug Honeycut, given him a fancy introduction, and altered the people he runs into: an old woman falls into a creek on account of Plug, so she pulls him in after her; a boy who has fallen off his bicycle and broken his eggs pushes Plug into the brambles when he thinks Plug's making fun of him; a farmer whose truck has a tree fallen on it makes Plug help him cut up the wood; a bald man makes Plug apologize; and the vain mayor's wife takes offence. This finally reminds Plug of the soap, which he fetches home to his mama, who washes him clean with it. In some ways this is a gentled version—for instance, the one-eyed man is deleted ("One's out, get the other'n out")—but the illustrations do emphasize the main character's sequential misfortunes. Glass' art also underscores conventional, even stereotyped, images of Appalachian hill people, though he's skilled at projecting graphic action with hatch and cross-hatch and his dominating colors of yellow, orange and red lighten up a rural fool's tale, which, when told plain, reveals to listeners a bittersweet streak of serio-comedy. BH

BOYD, CANDY DAWSON *Chevrolet Saturdays*. Macmillan, 1993 176p
 ISBN 0-02-711765-0 \$14.95 Ad Gr. 4-6

While Joey doesn't find his new stepfather Mr. Johnson "a bad man or even a mean one," he wants his own dad back, and the anxiety about his parents' divorce and his mother's remarriage is causing Joey some trouble in school, not helped by his hostile new fifth-grade teacher. This adjustment-to-divorce story covers all the bases in a way that's predictable but still sympathetic, as Joey grows to trust his stepfather via a series of Saturdays spent working with Mr. Johnson in his remodeling business. Mr. Johnson is a perfect role model, strict yet paternal, but his frequent sermons sound too much like the author talking to her readers with an earnestness that sometimes distracts from the fictional focus. Still, the African-American cast is a lively one, and Joey's school problems will strike a responsive chord among readers frustrated when their best efforts never seem to be quite good enough. RS

BRIDGERS, SUE ELLEN *Keeping Christina*. HarperCollins, 1993 [288p]
 Library ed. ISBN 0-06-021505-4 \$14.89
 Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-021504-6 \$15.00
 Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 8-12

Annie Gerhardt seems to have everything: a best friend since kindergarten, a wonderful boyfriend for almost as long a time, good grades in high school, a guaranteed spot as first-chair clarinet/concertmaster in a band that plays for the school's musicals, and most of all, a strong family—including a loving brother and sister and supportive parents. What turns her world upside down is a new girl in school, Christina, who insinuates herself into the family, plays on Annie's weaknesses, lies pathologically, manipulates Annie and her friends against each other, and ultimately causes an automobile accident that almost kills Annie's best friend. It's a powerful character study of the protagonist, and Bridgers capably builds suspense through Annie's first-person narrative, which makes readers want to shake her into seeing through Christina's ploys. Unfortunately, the only real insight we get into the antagonist's problems—aside from the stock explanation of a broken home and a mother who's unpleasant in a shadowy way—is Christina's concluding and only effort at honesty, when she tells Annie, "Just look at all this. You didn't do anything to get it—it was all here, it was all handed to you. You don't even know how to make things happen." In the end, Annie gets it all back, and Christina loses her illusory gains. Intentionally or not, there are some strong messages here: beware the stranger, and get born into the right family. Beyond that, there's also some first-class characterization, if not a lot of plot. The smooth writing and authentic school dynamics, including a showdown between students and administration over intellectual freedom (the question of who really wrote the plays attributed to Shakespeare becomes a hot issue when the head of the English department refuses to allow a debate as part of the curriculum), will capture readers. BH

CARRIS, JOAN *Stolen Bones*; illus. by Stephen Marchesi. Little, 1993 160p
 ISBN 0-316-13018-4 \$14.95 Ad Gr. 4-6

"Who's got my jawbone?" bellows an angry paleontologist at the beginning of this archaeologically themed mystery, which immediately sets the artifactual tone. The book's protagonist, eleven-year-old Alec, is the grandson of that paleontologist, the esteemed Dr. David Dillon. Alec and his mother are spending the summer at

the professor's dinosaur dig in Montana, and Alec is troubled by his grandfather's coldness toward him; he hopes to gain the old man's respect by finding the thief who's been taking artifacts from the dig. The plot is formulaic but lively as Alec, local girl Rina, and Alec's huge dog Isabel search through people's belongings, hunt down red herrings, and withstand adversity in order to unravel the mystery (which comes benignly clean without their help—dig workers were borrowing the artifacts in order to sketch them for a special birthday celebration for the professor). Also predictable is Alec's relationship with his grandfather—Dr. Dillon finds Alec's resemblance to the late Mrs. Dillon (who died the day Alec was born) too great to bear, hence his avoidance of Alec. The paleontological lore is laced thickly through the text, and there are textual explanations as well as a glossary. The dig story proves more rewarding than the mystery, but it's still an amiable book of mild adventure. Full-page black-and-white illustrations appear occasionally without adding much to the story; a glossary of archeological terms is included. DS

CASELEY, JUDITH *Sophie and Sammy's Library Sleepover*; written and illus. by Judith Caseley. Greenwillow, 1993 [32p]

Library ed. ISBN 0-688-10616-1 \$13.93

Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-10615-3 \$14.00

Reviewed from galleys

Ad 3-7 yrs

Don't panic! Sophie and her mom attend a "pretend" library sleepover where the children's librarian, dressed in a modest pink nightgown and bunny slippers, lights the storytime candle and leads her pajama-clad preschoolers and their parents (who stick to their early evening wardrobes) through three stories and lots of audience participation—swinging from jungle vines, listening for monster noises, and crawling into bed. Sophie wishes her toddler brother Sammy had been allowed to attend, but Sammy's under parental order to put away his books until he can treat them like friends. The next night in her own bed Sophie conducts a library sleepover just for Sammy, who announces at its conclusion that he's ready to have his books back. And Sophie declares her ambition to become a librarian. The story is a bit programmed, but Caseley's warm colors, cozy patterns, and round-faced preschoolers help make this user-friendly for both library and home readalouds. ELIZABETH HUNTOON

CASSEDY, SYLVIA *Zoomrimes: Poems about Things that Go*; illus. by Michele Chessare. HarperCollins, 1993 51p

Library ed. ISBN 0-06-022633-1 \$13.89

Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-022632-3 \$14.00

M Gr. 3-5

This posthumous followup to *Roomrimes* (BCCB 2/88) takes a transportational trip through the alphabet, from "Ark" ("Packed/ back to back/ on rack after rack,") to "Zeppelin" ("zipper all the people in/ and let them sail away"). While there are some fresh bursts of imagery and sound here and there throughout the collection, most of the poems seem overextended, belaboring not very interesting premises to either cutesy or pedestrian conclusions. "Floppy, sloppy," begins "Jalopy," which soon runs out of gas: "Stop/ goes my jalopy./ Stop/ goes my jalopy. Stop/ goes my jalopy. Stop." Other poems suffer from over-rhyming, such as "Limo": "Come now, every her and him-o, be you fat or be you slim-o; glad or grim-o; smart or dim-o; loud or prim-o . . ." There aren't enough ideas here to support the word-play, and the ultimate effect is jingly and sometimes desultory. Cozy, rumpled, black-and-white watercolors enliven the spacious pages. RS

CHOI, SOOK NYUL *Echoes of the White Giraffe*. Houghton, 1993 137p
ISBN 0-395-64721-5 \$13.95 Ad Gr. 6-9

In this sequel to Choi's dynamic *Year of Impossible Goodbyes* (BCCB 10/91), teen-aged Sookan recounts her experience as a refugee for two and a half years in Pusan, where she and her mother and younger brother have fled after the bombing of Seoul. Separated again from her father and older brothers, Sookan helps her mother get enough food, water, and supplies to eke out their existence in a barren shack high atop a mountain so slick with mud that they can barely manage to climb it every day. To some extent, the author has abandoned the storytelling style that casts such a spell in the first book; this one relates a situation without developing it consistently as fiction or decisively as nonfiction. For instance, the three older brothers who are introduced near the end of the book appear too briefly to become familiar despite their importance to the main character; we know that they are real in a factual sense and that she knows them, but we don't know them because their activities are summarized rather than detailed. Of course, the pace of waiting is always more technically difficult to sustain than the pace of survival. Like Siegal's *Grace in the Wilderness* (the sequel to *Upon the Head of the Goat*), this must abandon wartime drama for a kind of post-traumatic stress syndrome that is inherently less forceful. There are, however, some powerful scenes, along with a well-realized romance that is doomed by religious commitment and social differences; Sookan's total sense of displacement will offer young readers a natural point of empathy. BH

CLIMO, SHIRLEY, ad. *The Korean Cinderella*; illus. by Ruth Heller. HarperCollins, 1993 48p
Library ed. ISBN 0-06-020433-8 \$14.89
Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-020432-X \$15.00 Ad 5-7 yrs.

When Pear Blossom's mother dies, her father marries Omoni, who, with her daughter Peony, torments Pear Blossom and forces her to do impossible tasks. As in the Grimm variant of "Cinderella," Pear Blossom has the help of magical animals: a frog stops up the hole in a jug she must fill with water, sparrows hull rice that Omoni scatters on the ground, and a black ox weeds the fields. On her way to the village festival, Pear Blossom drops a sandal, which is picked up by a watchful magistrate who finds and marries her. Like Climo's *The Egyptian Cinderella* (BCCB 10/89), this has an author's note on the history of the tale, including the fact that her text is based on three variations, but no specific sources are cited. Heller, too, has a note on the traditional patterns she has adopted; however, these are not always incorporated successfully into her over-elaborate compositions, in which decorative designs crowd stiffly drawn figures. If this is to become a series (there are more than 500 Cinderella variants), it might be useful to students doing multicultural comparisons, but some textual documentation and graphic simplification are in order. BH

COMPTON, KENN *Jack the Giant Chaser: An Appalachian Tale*; written and illus. by Kenn and Joanne Compton. Holiday House, 1993 32p
ISBN 0-8234-0998-8 \$14.95 R 4-6 yrs.

The Comptons have trimmed to picture book size a long, complex, and very rich tale, "Jack in the Giants' Newground" from Richard Chase's *Jack Tales* (which they acknowledge in a commendable introductory source note). Some of the drama

is lost by the reduction of five many-headed, cannibalistic giants to one single-headed giant who confines his taste to stolen cows and pigs, but the tricks are still fun. Jack fools the giant into thinking he's going to rechannel a stream, throw a 150-pound knife over the mountains, and save the giant from an army by hiding him in a barrel, which he then rolls down the hill. The Comptons' introductory seven-in-one-blow motif is an addition that will draw listeners, and the slapstick watercolors have a Sue Truesdell/Jack Kent flair that will appeal mightily to the cartoon crowd. BH

CRESPO, GEORGE, ad. *How the Sea Began: A Taino Myth*; ad. and illus. by George Crespo. Clarion, 1993 32p

ISBN 0-395-63033-9 \$14.95

R 6-9 yrs.

A hunter who never fails to provide food for his people, Yayael is overtaken by a hurricane and never seen again. In searching for him, his father finds the young man's bow and arrows and hangs them in a gourd from the ceiling of their hut "in case Yayael's spirit should wish to visit them." Sure enough, during hard times Yayael's parents lower the gourd and tip out fresh fish, a wonder that repeats itself whenever the people are hungry—until several boys break the gourd and the water pours out to form the sea and all the fish therein. Crespo's oil paintings are naive in tone and lush in hue without becoming gaudy. His background note is extremely helpful, explaining both the geography described in the myth (the formation of the Greater Antilles occupied by Indians migrating from South America) and the cultural context: "It was the custom among the Taino to keep the bones of dead relatives in a gourd hung from the ceiling of the hut. When Yaya places Yayael's weapons in the gourd, he is symbolically burying his son." He also cites the five-hundred-year-old Spanish source, commissioned by Columbus, and offers a pronunciation guide. This will be especially welcome as a read-aloud in conjunction with histories such as Francine Jacobs' *The Tainos* (BCCB 5/92) and other alternative Columbus Day studies. BH

CROSS, GILLIAN *The Great American Elephant Chase*. Holiday House, 1993 193p

ISBN 0-8234-1016-1 \$14.95

R Gr. 5-8

Tad is fifteen and has never done anything right from the moment of his birth (so his caretaker aunt tells him), but his life changes when he semi-accidentally stows away in the wagon of an itinerant showman, a wagon which contains an elephant. Tad takes well to Khush the elephant, and when the showman is killed soon after giving Tad a job, he and Cissie, the showman's daughter, join forces to save Khush from the people who claim to be his new owners. This effort involves a traipse across nineteenth-century America as strong-willed Cissie and loyal Tad attempt to keep the elephant secret (with varying degrees of success) while they float down the Ohio and steam up the Mississippi, trekking across the prairie to Cissie's dear friend and hoped-for sanctuary in Nebraska. This isn't quite *Huckleberry Finn* with elephant but it's still good fun: Cross keeps her characters colorful (the traveling show is actually a classic medicine show scam), and the encounters with various friends, foes, and elephant gapers along the way are entertaining. Cissie, the old trouser but young kid, is a believable driving force, the villains are properly alarming, and the resolution satisfying. DS

DEAVER, JULIE REECE *You Bet Your Life*. Zolotow/HarperCollins, 1993 [224p]
 Library ed. ISBN 0-06-021517-8 \$14.89
 Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-021516-X \$15.00 Ad Gr. 7-10

Bess has been a schoolroom comic and a fan of Lucille Ball since she was little, and she's excited about her senior-year internship at a comedy/variety television show. Particularly important among her new colleagues are Elliot, an aspiring young comedian with whom she begins to work as a stand-up comedy team, and Georgia, the motherly writer, whose warmth comforts Bess, still grieving over her mother's recent suicide. Bess is a likeable character, and it's nice to see a funny young female who's depicted as talented rather than smartmouthed or pathetic; the TV studio setting adds appeal. The novel has some credibility problems, however: Georgia is too wonderful to be true, and Bess's letters to her dead mother have an unlikely degree of self-awareness. Nor is the comedy as funny as the characters seem to find it, although the broad humor is likelier to amuse kids than adults. The book is well-paced and readable, however, and Bess's professional and personal gains (including a real job in television starting next year, the beginning of a career as a comedian, and the commencement of a romance with Elliot) are satisfyingly depicted. DS

DEVITO, CARA *Where I Want to Be*. Houghton, 1993 [192p]
 ISBN 0-395-64592-1 \$13.95 R Gr. 8-12

Kristie is fourteen and rebellious, too smart and energetic for her tiny Arizona town in the desert, and although she pretends she doesn't, she misses her father, who died last year. Her adult half-brothers Derrin and Kyle, who've helped raise Kristie, adore her but don't know what to do for her as she tries to define herself and her place in the world. While she deals with adolescence, she hitches across the state to harass her cousins, becomes a reluctant heroine in a school-bus mishap, comes to grips with the return of her mother (who abandoned the family when Kristie was a toddler), and almost loses her brother Kyle, a deputy sheriff, in an attempted robbery. DeVito is a superb writer, so the various dramas blend together smoothly, making this not a book about events but about Kristie, a flip young woman whose life is unfolding more rapidly than she likes. The characterization—from dopey, lovable Kyle; to Kristie's Indian "grandmother"; to the irritating but safe Tyler twins who are Kristie's regular dates—is funny and individual, and the lively dialogue rings true. The atmosphere of the desert town of Show Low (the school-bus accident involves eight children, which is virtually the entire school-going population of the town) is vividly evoked, including the no-option nothingness, the old family knowledge of everybody else and vice versa, and the isolation. The unreliability of Kristie's narration may be too subtle for some young readers, but they'll enjoy her gutsy and successful struggle towards adulthood. DS

DEWEY, JENNIFER OWINGS *Spiders Near and Far*; written and illus. by Jennifer Owings Dewey. Dutton, 1993 48p
 ISBN 0-525-44979-5 \$14.99 R Gr. 4-6

Deceptively packaged, this carefully researched and detailed look at the spider world first appears to be an oversized treatment destined for the picture book shelves. Communicating her awe of the natural world as well as her respect for scientific observation, Dewey begins with a Pima Indian creation myth and then points out

the differences between spiders and insects. Both common and scientific names are used in the text and to identify the many colored-pencil drawings that give texture to jaws and fangs and place spiders in their natural habitats. By qualifying her general statements—spiders are silk spinners but they are not the only animals who do this—and by emphasizing that spiders can be found everywhere—from New Mexico to Mount Everest—the author avoids the sweeping generalizations often found in juvenile science treatments. Even the scientifically impaired will understand the technicalities of web spinning and spider digestion. And readers are not encouraged to collect but are given instructions on how to observe spiders in backyards and parks. An index and content headings provide access for report writers, and a note on the verso of the title page indicates that the manuscript was reviewed by the curator of zoology at the New Mexico Museum of Natural History. ELIZABETH HUNTOON

FALWELL, CATHRYN *Feast for 10*; written and illus. by Cathryn Falwell. Clarion, 1993 32p
ISBN 0-395-62037-6 \$14.95 R 2-5 yrs

A lively African-American family shops for, prepares, and eats a big dinner in *Feast for 10*, an appealing number book that counts to ten twice. Colorful cut-out illustrations on pages with lots of white space clearly identify the items to be counted. Cathryn Falwell, creator of the popular Nicky books, has not only delivered an action-filled counting book, but also provided a number of bonuses. The family bubbles over with their pleasure in being together. In addition, Dad is a strong domestic presence who helps with dinner. Spots of humor (one of the five kinds of beans they buy in the grocery store is jelly beans) help us to share in the delight of both family and story. This works as a counting book and as a picture book with a pleasing message of family togetherness. Pair with Molly Bang's *Ten, Nine, Eight* and children couldn't have a more satisfying count to ten and back again. CAROL FOX

GAY, KATHLYN *Breast Implants: Making Safe Choices*. New Discovery, 1993 128p (Open Door Books)
ISBN 0-02-737955-8 \$13.95 R Gr. 7-12

Gay raises this book above the usual "good for reports" level of a nonfiction treatment by going directly to women who've made choices, to their regret or satisfaction, about breast implants and by speaking to some experts involved in the controversy over the silicon-filled implants, as well as performing a sterling job of research on up-to-date secondary sources. She addresses the hows and whys of implant surgery and its historical evolution, the psychological and cultural reasons for reconstructive and cosmetic augmentation surgery, the medical and consumer confusion over the safety of silicon implants, possible corporate fraud, legal actions, and government response. The book presents various sides of the issue, but the overall message, an important one for medical care generally, is that a patient's best defense is information. This is a useful source made readable by personalizing anecdotes, and it explores some issues, such as the uneasy relationship between commercial corporations and medicine, that apply to health care in general. Young women (and any young men reading in the vain hope of racy description or entertaining illustrations) who pick up this book casually are likely to keep reading and

to become more thoughtful medical consumers as a result. Endnotes, a bibliography, and an index are included. DS

GOBLE, PAUL, ad. *The Lost Children: The Boys Who Were Neglected*; ad. and illus. by Paul Goble. Bradbury, 1993 32p
ISBN 0-02-736555-7 \$14.95

R* 5-8 yrs

"Nobody was kind to the brothers. Nobody wanted them." A family of six orphaned brothers have only castoffs for clothes, scraps for food, and camp dogs for friends. The other children in the tribe torment them so much that the brothers "did not even wish to be people any longer," and after much debate, decide to become stars. Goble's dignified, quiet retelling intensifies the painful story, and it's cold comfort to know that the brothers shine today as the Pleiades, surrounded by smaller stars, their loyal dog friends. The artist's familiar diagrammatic style is used to advantage, formalizing the poignant tale as well as providing some dramatic tableaux, as when Sun Man and Moon Woman welcome the children to the sky. A final spread takes the story into the present, showing the stars shining above repees and cars and telephone wires; "how beautiful the children look! And yet, how very far away they are now." Compared with the many problem-picture books about homelessness we've been seeing (as in Wild's *Space Travelers*, reviewed last month), this one achieves contemporary resonance via mythic projection and avoids both sentimentality and half-baked bibliotherapy. Scrupulous, interesting notes are included, as is a bibliography. RS

GRAVELLE, KAREN *Where Are My Birth Parents?: A Guide for Teenage Adoptees*; written by Karen Gravelle and Susan Fischer. Walker, 1993 [192p]
Library ed. ISBN 0-8027-8258-2 \$15.85
Trade ed. ISBN 0-8027-8257-4 \$14.95

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 7-12

Adoptees, say Gravelle and Fischer, "feel different because, in a fundamental sense, they are." For those adoptees whose search for their identity during the teen years includes the possibility of searching for their birth parents, this is a useful and supportive book. It isn't so much a how-to-search detective manual as an emotional guide: chapters address matters such as "Why Search?", "Telling Your Parents," and "The First Contact." Throughout, anecdotal reports from adoptees, adoptive parents, and birth parents help concretize more general statements, and the authors make a point of showing how birth parents and adoptive parents, as well as biological and adoptive siblings, might feel about the search, encouraging the realization that it may change many people's lives but still be a positive experience. The authors discuss variations on the process, such as international adoptees searching abroad for birth parents, and variations on response, from fear and resentment to great pleasure to lack of success. They also include opinions that may challenge the orthodox line on adoption ("If a child is surrendered, no one sees that as a tragedy," says one adoptee. "I wish the parents that do adopt could somehow try to acknowledge that this is a bad thing that happened [to the child]") but may also comfort those readers whose similar feelings have never been expressed. This is a straightforward, easily readable, and reassuring book that many young people will find helpful to read even if they choose not to search as teens, or at all. An extensive list of search and support groups, registries, and counseling centers is included, along with a bibliography and index. DS

GREGG, ANDY, ad. *Great Rabbit and the Long-tailed Wildcat*, illus. by Cat Bowman Smith. Whitman, 1993 32p
ISBN 0-8075-3047-6 \$13.95

R 4-6 yrs

After a helpful note citing the Native American storyteller from whom a nineteenth-century folklorist collected this *pourquoi* tale—which is loosely adapted from *The Algonquian Legends of New England* (1884)—Wildcat and Great Rabbit are off and running on a chase Great Rabbit is sure to win. And as soon as we find out that Wildcat is proud of his long, beautiful, bushy tail, we know he's going to lose it, along with his bid to eat Great Rabbit. Both words and illustrations are styled to highlight the humor of these two characters without becoming cute or condescending. Gregg plays on the pattern of their encounters: each time, Wildcat falls prey to an illusion of food and shelter provided by Great Rabbit variously disguised as a medicine man ("I can't help but notice that you have very long ears"), an old woman ("Your braids look just like rabbit ears"), and a warrior ("You know, those feathers in your hair look very much like the ears of a rabbit"). Matching the sly verbal rhythms (including a quick-paced end rhyme) are refreshingly rough-hewn paintings in a book of unprepossessing size, an aesthetic combination that manages to avoid the plush effects overcushioning so much picture book folklore. Heavy outlines, deep hues, and expressionistic textures in the full-page recto compositions face off with a clean verso of text framed in traditional Native American patterns. A sure read-aloud, but leave plenty of time to look at the pictures. BH

GUTMAN, DAN *Baseball's Biggest Bloopers: The Games that Got Away*. Viking, 1993 160p illus. with photographs
ISBN 0-670-84603-1 \$13.99

R Gr. 4-7

This book describes several infamous errors made by professional baseball players and umpires during World Series games. There are two sections: "The Four Most Dramatic Mistakes in Baseball History" include Merkle's 1908 "Bonehead" play, Snodgrass' 1912 muff, Owen's dropped third strike in 1941, and Buckner's boot in 1986; but the eight "Other Legendary Bloopers and Blunders" seem equally unfortunate. Gutman's taste for drama goes beyond the sports broadcaster language he employs; his use of the device "FREEZE THIS MOMENT" on the verge of a blooper will put readers into a television replay mode. The statistics and trivia that fans lust after close every chapter: "Also in 1924 . . . Wheaties—the Breakfast of Champions—was introduced." A black-and-white portrait and action shot or two illustrate each highlighted. Professional sports are so macho that it's nice for little leaguers to be able to read about heroes blowing it big time. BH

HAN, OKI S., ad. *Sir Whong and the Golden Pig*; ad. by Oki S. Han and Stephanie Haboush Plunkett; illus. by Oki S. Han. Dial, 1993 [32p]
Library ed. ISBN 0-8037-1345-2 \$13.89
Trade ed. ISBN 0-8037-1344-4 \$13.99
Reviewed from galleys

R 4-6 yrs.

Sir Whong is renowned for his wisdom, but he falls dupe to a con-man named Mr. Oh, who borrows one thousand nyung for medicine to cure his "poor, old mother"—actually, he squanders it on parties. Sir Whong soon discovers that the golden pig Mr. Oh has put up for security is fake, so he must trick Mr. Oh into returning the money. Han's watercolors, reliant on earth tones of brown and

green, have a graceful fluidity and sly humor, especially in the two main characters' expressions. The rural Korean landscape and domestic scenes use rounded, organic shapes suddenly contrasted with angular verticals, which vary the compositions without making them cluttered. It's too bad there's no note as to the story's source, although the book jacket hints that Han's father told her "many traditional Korean tales" (was this one of them?). There is, however, a brief introductory description of ancient Korean money, of the alphabet, and of the wedding ceremony, which figures in the story. The narration is fully realized but not too long for the target audience, who will enjoy seeing the tables turned on a shyster (for another Korean tale of genial comeuppance, see Rhee's *Magic Spring*, reviewed below). BH

HARRIS, MARK JONATHAN *Solay*. Bradbury, 1993 137p
ISBN 0-02-742655-6 \$13.95

Ad Gr. 4-6

Melissa hates her new school, hates California (she's a New Yorker), and hates her fifth-grade class, which hates her right back. She's a mild-mannered, brainy type, out of step with the Fashion Critics (as she terms the nasty and popular girls) who torment her both verbally and with practical "jokes." When Solay, a pugnacious girl from a distant planet, turns up, she encourages Melissa to be nasty in return, which only causes more trouble until finally Melissa's schoolwork suffers and her parents have to get involved, which leads eventually to solution of the problem. Although the anguish of misfit newness is well-depicted, the meanness of the popular kids, Melissa, and Solay makes the book unpleasant to read, since there are really no moments of respite from the back-and-forth cruelty. Solay is less an extraterrestrial than a random preteen without a superego who could have just as easily been an out-of-town cousin, so the interplanetary theme distracts from rather than focuses the narrative. The school story rings true, however, and kids (who are less likely than one would wish to internalize the "make nice" moral) may enjoy rooting for the comeuppance of the snotty grade-school nobility. DS

HENDRY, DIANA *Double Vision*. Candlewick, 1993 [271p]
ISBN 1-56402-125-4 \$14.95

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 9 up

This leisurely, lengthy, very British import charts the delights and heartbreaks of a postwar family with three daughters: Rosa, romantic, dramatic, and intent on marrying up; Eliza, fifteen, who has a desperate crush on a graduate student boarder at her best friend Jo's house; and little Lily, half plague-child to her older sisters and half elf-wise *enfant*. The best, least self-conscious parts of the book focus on Eliza and her turbulent friendship with the overly sophisticated Jo; Eliza's intense crush on the boarder and easygoing courtship with a boy her own age also provide for a satisfyingly romantic atmosphere. However, the point of view jumps around too much, letting us into the thoughts of not just the three girls but their parents as well, so we get lots of dry, sometimes arch adult pondering on religious assimilation (Mrs. Bishop was born a Jew) and class: "They had moved forward in the cinema—to the expensive seats in the dress circle—and forward in life, into the ranks of the middle class." While it lacks the extravagant sweep of Michelle Magorian's *Not a Swan* (BCCB 9/92), the book might find an audience among Anglophile high school girls not quite ready for Elizabeth Bowen or Muriel Spark. RS

HOFF, SYD *Captain Cat*; written and illus. by Syd Hoff. HarperCollins, 1993 48p (I Can Read Books)

Library ed. ISBN 0-06-020528-8 \$12.89

Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-020527-X \$13.00

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. K-2

Captain Cat has joined the Army, and boot camp seems a pretty nice place, with soldiers of various races and both sexes sometimes finding a moment between chores and maneuvers to say hi to kitty, who "has more stripes than we have." But Captain Cat's truest friend is Pete, who spends so much time neglecting his chores for Captain Cat that he's assigned kitchen duty: "Pete let Captain Cat play with the potato peels." The storyline is fairly slender, but the friendship rings true, and kids will enjoy watching the cat go through his military paces. As always, Hoff's cheerful, expressive cartoons have a welcoming appeal to new readers. RS

JOHNSON, ANGELA *Toning the Sweep*. Jackson/Orchard, 1993 103p

Library ed. ISBN 0-531-08626-7 \$13.99

Trade ed. ISBN 0-531-05476-4 \$13.95

R* Gr. 6-10

Every summer, Emmie has gone to visit Grandmama Ola in the California desert that she loves with the same energy with which Mama hates it. This, her fourteenth summer, may be her last there for a long time, because Ola is dying of cancer. Mama and Emmie are helping her pack up the house, and the three women are saying goodbye—Ola to her friends, Emmie to her childhood, and Mama to a past that includes the murder of her father by Alabama racists back in 1964. Through the videotape she makes of Ola and her friends, Emmie learns much about the two older women and even about herself; by the time they leave, some of the lifelong tensions among the three have eased into a better understanding. Perhaps because of her practice on books for younger children (*Tell Me a Story, Mama*, BCCB 2/89), Johnson has avoided any hint of didacticism in this traditional rite of passage. Emmie's understanding, and even the dramatic incident of her grandfather's death, are unfolded through subtle action at a pace natural to the protagonist's development. There are no long explanations or sudden epiphanies, and Johnson trusts the reader to discover, as do the characters, how events of the past circle into the present. The first-person, present-tense narrative occasionally runs the risk of being fragmentary, but the character dynamics and compression generate enough tension to give readers a sense of viewing a rich situation through the camcorder, right along with Emmie. BH

KERMIT THE FROG *For Every Child, a Better World*; as told to Louise Gikow and Ellen Weiss; illus. by Bruce McNally. Muppet Press/Golden Books, 1993 [48p]

ISBN 0-307-15628-1 \$9.95

Reviewed from galleys

R 5-8 yrs

Multicultural muppets (purple, blue, and orange, as well as Kermit's familiar green) are used here to explain in simple terms the basic rights of children as set down by the United Nations. Concepts are presented through opposition: "Every child needs food to eat," is illustrated with a painting of a happy muppet family enjoying dinner together; the page-turn reveals that "sometimes there isn't enough to go around," illustrated by skeletal muppets, one with a distended stomach, starving under a hot desert sun. While the upbeat illustrations are sometimes luridly colored, the darker-toned sad pictures face facts, and the use of muppets rather than

human characters may allow for both necessary distance and empathy with TV favorites. Other rights included are clean water, a home, clean air, medical care, schooling, play, peace, and intellectual freedom. It's rare that a message book works so well, and this one is clear and well-paced enough for individual reflection and at the same time for use as a discussion starter at school or home. RS

KRAMER, S. A. *To the Top!: Climbing the World's Highest Mountain*; illus. by Thomas La Padula and with photographs. Random House, 1993 48p (Step into Reading)

Library ed. ISBN 0-679-93885-0 \$7.99

Paper ed. ISBN 0-679-83885-6 \$3.50

R Gr. 3-5

Action-packed watercolors and occasional color photos illustrate a you-are-there sketch of Sir Edmund Hillary's historic ascent of Mt. Everest. Unlike many books that give Hillary most of the credit, this one gives equal time to the Sherpa guide Tenzing Norgay, emphasizing that the final attainment of the summit was gained by both men. The narrative progress is steady, and exclamation points are kept under control until the last chapters ("Then Hillary has an idea!"). For struggling and reluctant readers, the present-tense text is easy, and the appeal is solid as a rock. RS

LANGONE, JOHN *Spreading Poison: A Book about Racism and Prejudice*. Little, 1993 178p

ISBN 0-316-51410-1 \$15.95

R Gr. 7-12

With a stated commitment to the idea that prejudice is based on ignorance, fear of the unknown, and perception of a scapegoat as economic or political threat, Langone selects particular groups as examples for his systematic overview of discrimination. After an introduction "exploding the myth of racial purity," he devotes chapters to African Americans, Jews, other religious groups, Native Americans, various immigrant peoples, women ("oppressing the majority"), homosexuals, and the disabled. There's a mix of historical background and contemporary situations described for each group, there's a footnote citing the source for every quote (but no bibliography), and for the most part, there's substantiation for Langone's argument. Every once in a while, he oversimplifies and/or generalizes without sufficient documentation. For instance, the statement that "No one knows how many women were executed as witches, but the estimates range into the millions" begs for a reference as to whose estimates. On the whole, however, this provides a solid start for junior high and high school students researching minorities in American history and social studies. Readers may not want to plow through the whole survey, but browsing for specifics will be easy because of the clear organization and index. BH

LAVIES, BIANCA *Compost Critters*; written and illus. with photographs by Bianca Lavies. Dutton, 1993 32p

ISBN 0-525-44763-6 \$14.99

R Gr. 3-6

The last time Bianca Lavies was reviewed in these pages, she was dangling from a riverbank with her camera submerged in frigid waters to photograph *Atlantic Salmon* (BCCB 4/92). This time she's in her own backyard making a compost pile and documenting the "community of critters" that "come through the air and soil in her yard to feast there." This inside look at the compost community examines the life and times of some of its members, including earthworms ("Earthworms are the

untiring plows of the pile”) and lesser-known beasts such as millipedes and nematodes. The close-up pictures of glistening worms, shimmering millipedes, and gleaming bread-molds reinforce the extraordinariness of the ordinary, and everything looks good enough to—well, pretty darn fascinating, anyhow, in a way that will elicit cries of “Cool!” as well as “Gross!” It’s also interesting to see the effect of the rich compost on the nearby plants (“the tomatoes were three times bigger than usual”) in the garden. Scale of the pictured creatures is sometimes difficult to determine, and the tone here is a little cuter than usual for Lavies, with the recurring usage of the term “critters” and the narration inexplicably in the third person about “Bianca’s compost pile”; a technical note about the photography (as was appended to *Atlantic Salmon*) would have been welcome. Still, it’s an intriguing look into a vital microcosm that kids will dig. DS

LAWLOR, LAURIE *George on His Own*; illus. by Toby Gowing. Whitman, 1993 191p
ISBN 0-8075-2823-4 \$11.95 R Gr. 4-6

Twelve-year-old George is the oldest child in the family now that his sister Addie (featured in *Addie’s Dakota Winter*, BCCB 12/89, etc.) has gone away to school. The position only seems to bring him trouble, however: he can’t please his father, who works hard to eke out the family’s livelihood on the nineteenth-century Dakota prairie, and George’s love of music (in the form of his beloved trombone) brings him further parental scorn. After his little sister dies of measles, George’s guilt leads him to run away, joining up with a band of traveling players and charlatans until his loneliness drives him back home. Lawlor has a simple and gentle style that nonetheless deals matter-of-factly with the hard life on the frontier and the changing family dynamics. Pa does love and miss his son, but he is a hard man, and George’s struggles are sympathetically portrayed. Much closer to the Wilder spirit than many such efforts, this will please young fans of apolitical historical fiction. DS

LAWRENCE, LOUISE *Keeper of the Universe*. Clarion, 1993 228p
ISBN 0-395-64340-6 \$13.95 Ad Gr. 7-10

Christopher (a British teen from Earth), Kysha (a young woman from orderly, sweetness-and-light Erinos), and Mahri (a warrior queen from Herra-Venda) have been brought to the castle of the powerful Ben-Harran, a Galactic Controller. Ben-Harran is on trial for what the High Council of Atui terms genocide, but it seems things are not so simple: Atui keeps planets, such as Kysha’s Erinos, under complete control, leaving no room for free will, and dissenter Ben-Harran, by allowing planets in his jurisdiction (including Earth) self-determination, has permitted one of them to blow itself up. Christopher and Kysha, who are drawn to each other despite their differences, and newly-reformed Mahri are to speak in Ben-Harran’s defense, and Lawrence twists the philosophical aspect interestingly by having Kysha, after her initial horror, espouse Ben-Harran’s cause while Christopher, fearing for the fate of Earth, refuses to support him. The philosophy, however, is preachy, protracted, and obvious, with concepts that will be familiar to any reader of *A Wrinkle in Time* discussed as if novel, and the anthropomorphic machines and robots, apparently intended to provide humor, grow rather tiresome. The characters of Kysha and Christopher are appealing, so a fantasy fan sufficiently philosophical to warm to the ethical debate may find their story worth pursuing. DS

LEVITIN, SONIA *The Golem and the Dragon Girl*. Dial, 1993 188p

Library ed. ISBN 0-8037-1281-2 \$14.89

Trade ed. ISBN 0-8037-1280-4 \$14.99

M Gr. 6-8

Levitin has contrived a situation in which two junior high classmates must deal with similar problems: a move neither of them wants, Jonathan into Laurel's beloved old home and Laurel into a new house; a family change that threatens their status quo, immigrating grandparents for Laurel and a new stepfather for Jonathan; and a set of ethnic traditions—Chinese for Laurel and Jewish for Jonathan—that seem to become more demanding even as the two kids become more ambivalent about them. Given the complicated parallels, the plot hardly needs the further weight of an attack by racist vandals on Laurel's Chinese school and a romance on the part of Jonathan's Uncle Jake, at which point stock conventions and well-intended clichés replace complexities of development. It's odd, too, that in a novel about traditions, these are slightly askew. Uncle Jake, who has taught Jonathan about Judaism, introduces the golem as "a sort of ghost from Transylvania or Poland or Germany." Although he goes on to define it more accurately, the golem is repeatedly referred to as a ghost, which it is not. At one point, Jonathan plays percussion to the beat of a klezmer band, "echoing Uncle Jake's joy until the two of them were clearly celebrating New Year's Eve, though it was only September"—an odd comment in light of the fact that the Jewish New Year *is* in September. Laurel's reliance on fortune cookies for advice borders on stereotypical, as do Grandmother's "large almond-shaped eyes." Jonathan seems to resolve his problems with his stepfather by epiphany and then celebrates by running a ten-kilometer race although, as far as the reader knows, he's never even jogged before. The problematic details and trite style indicate a broad surface skimmed too lightly. Where Laurel and Jonathan find room to explore, their story deepens, but too often they are simply fitted into the purposive scheme of things. BH

LEWIN, TED *I Was a Teenage Professional Wrestler*. Jackson/Orchard, 1993 128p illus. with photographs

Library ed. ISBN 0-531-08627-5 \$16.99

Trade ed. ISBN 0-531-05477-2 \$16.95

Ad Gr. 5-8

More a series of vignettes than an autobiography, this book tells of well-known illustrator Ted Lewin's professional wrestling career, which supported him through art school. He and his two brothers, fascinated with the sport from early youth, all ended up in the ring, where they became acquainted with the likes of Dangerous Danny McShain (later to marry Lewin's sister), Kola "the Russian Bear" Kwariani, and Frank Hickey (alias Bozo Brown). Lewin tells not only of the hard work of wrestling but also the hard work of pleasing crowds, in venues ranging from insane asylums to farmers' fields; to call the depicted milieu of caped characters, rioting crowds, and midget wrestlers colorful is to engage in understatement. This is a painter's book, filled not only with photographs of the cast of characters but also Lewin's sketches and paintings of his comrades-in-trunks (who admired his artistic talent). It's also written in scenes rather than as a story, leaving us to wonder what happened to many of the people in the book who show up larger-than-life only to fade away, and the scenes are more notable for content than for style. The book is an interesting evocation of a particular kind of Americana, however, and fans of Chris Crutcher and John Irving (as well as those who regularly tune in to

WWF) will relish this easy and redolent read. A glossary of wrestling terms and holds is included. DS

MCDERMOTT, GERALD *Raven: A Trickster Tale from the Pacific Northwest*; written and illus. by Gerald McDermott. Harcourt, 1993 32p
ISBN 0-15-265661-8 \$14.95 R* 4-6 yrs

See this month's Big Picture for review.

MCGRAW, ELOISE *Tangled Webb*. McElderry, 1993 154p
ISBN 0-689-50573-6 \$13.95 R Gr. 4-7

Juniper is twelve, and she and her best friend Alison love mysteries—they weave the slightest hint of the unusual into a tapestry of drama. Juniper becomes uneasy, however, when her own life begins to provide fodder for these fantasies, as her new young stepmother, Kelsey, can't come up with a believable account of her or her son's past. The oddities mount up: Kelsey's recollection of her first husband's name is faulty, she privately calls her son Preston by another name, and she may be dyeing his hair as well as her own. Juniper, along with Alison and old-friend-turned Peter, tracks down the mystery with the aid of chance, research, and some duplicitous phone calls, until all is revealed. This is sort of the sunny side of a Lois Duncan mystery: Juniper genuinely likes Kelsey and is pleased that the mystery's solution allows her new family to grow closer, and the story doesn't need to menace or endanger Juniper for its excitement. McGraw does address the step-situation, with Juniper mourning her mom and feeling displaced by Kelsey's presence, but it blends seamlessly into the melodrama. The story as narrated by Juniper is well-paced and smoothly written, and kids will enjoy the excitement of the young sleuth's tracking down the important truth. DS

MCMILLAN, BRUCE *A Beach for the Birds*; written and illus. with photographs by Bruce McMillan. Houghton, 1993 32p
ISBN 0-395-64050-4 \$15.95 R Gr. 4-6

McMillan's full-color photodocumentary of the endangered Least Tern describes the bird's physical characteristics, its beach habitat along the Little River on the Maine coast, mating and reproduction cycles, and migration. The Least Tern presents an interesting example of adaptation to a salt water environment, since it derives its water from the fish it eats and from actually imbibing salt water, with a special gland to collect excess salt and secrete it in concentrated droplets from nose holes on the upper bill. The text is clear and full of information, though it seems to jump around a bit when the author abruptly introduces comparisons between children's behavior and birds' behavior. The brilliant action shots are enough to lure kids into a nature watch of their own, however, and further facts are listed for reference at the book's end, along with a glossary and index. BH

MADDERN, ERIC, ad. *The Fire Children: A West African Creation Tale*; illus. by Frané Lessac. Dial, 1993 26p
ISBN 0-8037-1477-7 \$14.50 R 5-8 yrs

Just as two spirit people peek out of his mouth, the great sky-god Nyame sneezes. Propelled downward, Aso Yaa and Kwaku Ananse make themselves comfortable on Earth and eventually shape some children out of clay. These bake to different

colors when Nyame appears unexpectedly for visits (the two spirit people are uneasy about pulling their creations out of the fire in the presence of the sky-god). And those fire children—brown, red, yellow, pink, and white, all loved alike by their parents—populate the world. Implanted in Lessac's naive, earth-toned gouache paintings, this adaptation of a West African myth (an earlier printed source is cited, along with a note of thanks to someone who remembered hearing the tale from her grandmother) nurtures strong images in both art and text. The mask-face of Nyame is the strongest graphic feature, with verdantly patterned compositions consistent throughout. The story itself acquires fresh relevance in both celebrating differences among children and caring for them equally, whatever their differences. BH

MARTIN, RAFA, ad. *The Boy Who Lived with the Seals*; illus. by David Shannon. Putnam, 1993 [32p]
ISBN 0-399-22413-0 \$14.95

Reviewed from galleys

R 5-8 yrs

This Chinook legend recounts the story of a young boy who disappears by a great river and is found, years later, sunning with seals. Although his parents teach him to walk, talk, and eat normally again, he is haunted by his underwater past; the only thing that brings him peace is carving beautiful objects on the shore. At last he can resist the calling seals no longer, and he leaps from his parents' canoe. They, in turn, sink his carving tools and receive, each spring, a beautifully carved new canoe and paddle. Shannon's paintings are dark and dramatic, with his trademark textures of smooth, almost sculptured surfaces and brooding figures. This sometimes creates a cold effect, but the motif of a boy adopted by seals will draw children who have heard Kipling's *Mowgli* and other wild child stories, as well as those who enjoy the Celtic selkie tales (Cooper's *The Selkie Girl*, BCCB 11/86; Gerstein's *The Seal Mother*, 11/86; Yolen's *Greyling*, 5/69). An author's note gives the source and some background on the story, which is the second collaboration by the author/artist team who produced *The Rough-Face Girl* (BCCB 4/92). BH

MATHEWS, JUDITH *An Egg and Seven Socks*; illus. by Marylin Hafner. HarperCollins, 1993 32p

Library ed. ISBN 0-06-020208-4 \$13.89

Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-020207-6 \$14.00

Ad 5-8 yrs

Three silly sisters—Lacey, Doily, and Thimblethreads—are content to do the only thing they know how to do, which is mend socks, until a wind comes in and blows all their work and Thimblethreads' darning egg away. "We must get that egg back!" says Lacey. "It came from MOTHER!" On their journey, they meet a donkey, a king, and a dragon. The first is useful, the second useless, and the third dissipated with when he chokes on a sock: "Darn it! Darn this sock!" he cleverly gasps before breathing, or rather not breathing, his last. The story is just a bit crowded: Thimblethreads talks in rhyme, and the king interrupts the sisters' quest more than moving it along; both devices dissipate the momentum rather than heighten it. However, the wordplay is fun, the feminist adventure (complete with a traditional women's motif of weaving/mending/sewing) is lively, and these are some of Hafner's best illustrations. The watercolors are intensely hued and actively rendered, with an imposing dragon who's color coordinated with several impressive landscapes. At the same time, the artist hasn't lost her sprightly sense of cartooning, with humorous touches reminiscent of Paul Galdone's. BH

MATTHEWS, DOWNS *Arctic Summer*; illus. with photographs by Dan Guravich. Simon, 1993 33p
ISBN 0-671-79539-2 \$14.00 Ad Gr. 3-5

At first, it seems that this photo-logue of the Arctic will take a cyclical approach ("Plants make all life possible"), but the text, while always clear, soon takes on the function of glorified captions to a set of glorious photographs. Every double spread introduces a new Arctic animal and sometimes the transition seems abrupt, moving, for example, from ermines to muskoxen. Sometimes the text indulges in anthropomorphism, as in a comment on the parenting talents of the Arctic tern: "Arctic terns are good parents." This necessarily invites a comparison, but what species are "bad parents"? Each of the spreads, though, is informative, and the color photographs, clear and close-up, together give a full picture of Arctic flora and fauna. RS

MICHEL, FRANÇOIS *Water*; illus. by Yves Larvor. Lothrop, 1993 10p
ISBN 0-688-11427-X \$19.95 R Gr. 3-7

An extravagant array of pop-up, pull-tab and lift-the-flap devices animates this introduction to water in its many homes and guises, from groundwater to oceans to icecaps, and its many uses, such as drinking, heating and hydroelectric power. The five double-spreads are titled "Water for Life," "Underground Water," "Water in the City," "Water Power," and "The Seacoast," and, as is not true of most pop-up books, the gimmicks here are actually useful. A picture of a limestone cliff opens to reveal a cave with a further tab that shows the formation of stalactites and stalagmites; a tab that pulls the tides in and out also reveals a moon from behind a cloud. The information is a bit scattered—it's hard to tell what to pull first—but each of the spreads is ultimately coherent and the elegant illustrations are finely detailed and filled with beautiful blues. There's lots to look at and lots to do, and when kids get tired of tossing the bucket down the well, they can turn the turbine and watch a little light bulb glow yellow, or make the boat go up and down in the lock. The pages are sturdy, in fact, practically waterproof. RS

MIKAELSEN, BEN *Sparrow Hawk Red*. Hyperion, 1993 185p
Library ed. ISBN 1-56282-388-4 \$14.89
Trade ed. ISBN 1-56282-387-6 \$14.95 R Gr. 5-8

When eighth-grader Ricky discovers that the mother he thought was killed in an accident was actually murdered by drug dealers, he determines to get revenge. His father, a former DEA agent, wants nothing to do with the agency's latest scheme to hijack the drug dealers' surveillance plane out of Mexico, but Ricky, a junior ace pilot, decides he can do it and sneaks across the border, disguises himself as a *ratero*, a street kid, and with the help of a Mexican girl makes his way to the cartel's compound. Realistic it ain't, but the pace and the chase are tremendously exciting, and the glimpse into the lives of the *rateros* is unflinching. The daredevil aerobatics Ricky and his dad perform in their plane are heart-pounding, and reluctant readers will fly through the story to the finish. RS

MORRIS, ANN *Puddle Jumper: How a Toy Is Made*; illus. with photographs by Ken Heyman. Lothrop, 1993 24p
Library ed. ISBN 0-688-10205-0 \$12.93
Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-10204-2 \$13.00 Ad 4-7 yrs

A modern day Geppetto and his preschool daughter are the subjects of this photographic essay, which takes readers step-by-step through the design and construction of a puddle jumper, an updated version of a rocking horse. Sarah is pictured helping her father with some of the simpler tasks such as selecting wood, measuring, and packing the finished toys; her father operates the planer, the rotary saw, and the drum sander on his own, while the text identifies but only briefly explains the woodworking equipment. Admittedly, a complicated process like woodworking must be simplified for preschoolers, but the posed photographs and utilitarian prose may strain readers' attention unless they have a technical bent. Older readers, whether experienced or inexperienced woodworkers, will notice that precautions such as safety glasses are worn by Sarah's father, but they're not emphasized in context or in notes to parents and teachers. ELIZABETH HUNTOON

MURROW, LIZA KETCHUM *Twelve Days in August*. Holiday House, 1993 202p
ISBN 0-8234-1012-9 \$14.95 R Gr. 9-12

Todd is intrigued with two newcomers to his small Maine town: the Beekman twins are from California, and Rita Beekman is gorgeous while Alex Beekman turns out to be a terrific soccer player, presenting the possibility that Todd might find himself on the junior varsity team once again. Both boys make the varsity team, but Alex is hounded by the local bully Randy, who, protective of his own star status, spreads a rumor that Alex—and maybe Todd—is gay. While a touch formulaic, the novel takes a good look at high school homophobia, capturing particularly well Todd's ambivalence toward Alex, his natural impulse to be friendly tempered by his desire not to be labelled as gay. Seasoned readers of problem novels will spot early on that Todd's favorite uncle is gay, but they will also appreciate the easy integration of the soccer action with the serious theme, as Randy struggles with his own prejudices while still wanting to be part of a winning team. The conflicts are well-paced and while the message of tolerance is pervasive, the book is never preachy. RS

O'BRIEN, ANNE SIBLEY, ad. *The Princess and the Beggar: A Korean Folktale*; ad. and illus. by Anne Sibley O'Brien. Scholastic, 1993 [32p]
ISBN 0-590-46092-7 \$14.95

Reviewed from galleys

Ad 5-8 yrs.

A romantic tale in the Pygmalion mode reverses sex roles in a most satisfying way, as the Weeping Princess escapes her boring aristocratic fate by marrying a beggar, Pabo Ondal, and teaching him to ride in the Festival of Hunters and to write the winning poem in the Festival of Scholars. His merit is soon recognized by the king, who subsequently recognizes his daughter as well, and offers to reward them both. But the wise couple wish only to serve him and return to their familial happiness in the forest: the final spread shows their four girls running to meet Pabo Ondal. Framed in tan rice paper, the pastel illustrations are studied and sometimes overcolored, with distant landscapes better drafted than closeups, and impressionistic effects more imaginative than literal effects. Her note about costumes, setting, and the popularity of Pabo Ondal in Korea mentions that "several written versions place the story in the late sixth century" but does not name them. Children will enjoy hearing this alongside tales of physical transformation such as "Beauty and the Beast." BH

O'DONNELL, ELIZABETH LEE *Are You Flying, Charlie Duncan?*; illus. by Karen Milone. Morrow, 1993 [96p]

ISBN 0-688-09027-3 \$14.00

Reviewed from galleys

M Gr. 4-6

Charlie is a shy, awkward, lonely fifth-grader who gets along poorly with people but splendidly with balloons. In fact, they talk to him: Green, the street-smart balloon Charlie acquires at a circus, is a lively companion until he takes off. Charlie discovers that he himself must be part balloon, because he can make himself fly like one; this allows him (with the assistance of a cheerful lark and a snobbish yellow balloon) to find his friend Green, who helps him understand his own individuality. The whimsy here is applied rather than integral, the sensibility is downright babyish, too young for this level of reading, and the phenomena of Charlie's communicative and aerodynamic powers are protracted rather than explored. The characterization, especially of the evil bully, is simplistic, and Charlie's specialness, which leads him to ask the teacher questions that inspire her to give the class new assignments, is unlikely to garner much reader sympathy. The style is competent; perhaps this gentle story's best chance is as a readaloud for younger grades. DS

OSBORNE, MARY POPE *Spider Kane and the Mystery at Jumbo Nightcrawler's*; illus. by Victoria Chess. Knopf, 1993 142p

ISBN 0-679-80856-6 \$14.00

R Gr. 4-7

While *Spider Kane and the Mystery under the May-Apple* (BCCB 5/92) had its operatic dimensions, this one has the hot blues of a summer night, as the master detective Kane and his cohorts descend upon Jumbo Nightcrawler's nightclub on Waterfront Row. Each member, except young Leon, of Spider Kane's Order of the MOTH has received a message from Kane to come to the nightspot, but it turns out the notes aren't from him, and the faithful crimefighters have instead been kid-, er, bug-napped. In a star turn à la *The Crying Game*, the torchy hostess of the club, Saratoga D'Bee, is the glamorous center of the mystery, which Spider Kane wraps up in his inimitably tidy fashion. The story is fast and jazzy, imbued with the wink of a send-up but never betraying readers' empathy for the inhabitants, both friendly and ferocious, of its bug-world. Precise ink-and-wash illustrations project the many-legged denizens of the Cottage Garden and Waterfront Row with wit and affection. RS

PULLMAN, PHILIP *The White Mercedes*. Knopf, 1993 171p

ISBN 0-679-83198-3 \$16.00

R Gr. 9-12

Fans of Robert Cormier should appreciate this tense new thriller that gives away its ending—though none of its suspense—in the first sentence: "Chris Marshall met the girl he was going to kill on a warm night in early June." They meet at an Oxford prom, where Chris hides Jenny from some drunken and voracious undergraduates. Chris is an Oxford townie; Jenny has run away from her sexually abusive father and settled in a squat with a couple of small-time drug dealers. Their fast-track romance is surrounded by secrets, lies, and misunderstandings; as in Avi's *Nothing But the Truth*, all the characters here spend a lot of time bumbling in the dark, a metaphor that turns true in the novel's tragic climax and skin-crawlingly ironic conclusion. The book moves fast, sometimes to the point of being rushed, as in a scene where Chris falls far too easily into a trap set by a criminal who is intent upon killing Chris' boss, and the psychologizing can be overtly stated rather

than demonstrated. But as with Cormier's *We All Fall Down*, for example, there is within the violence and intrigue a fierce moral core that both informs and impels the action. RS

RAYNER, MARY *Garth Pig Steals the Show*; written and illus. by Mary Rayner. Dutton, 1993 32p
ISBN 0-525-45023-8 \$13.99 R 5-8 yrs

Mary Rayner's pigs (*Mr. and Mrs. Pig's Evening Out*, BCCB 1/77, etc.) are back, all ten piglets and their parents, and they've formed a band called the Pig Players. Their advertisement for an outside musician brings in a sousaphone player with a furry face, pointy ears, Granny-eating smile, and the enthusiastically ambiguous statement, "There's nothing I like better than a helping of pig." Her fiendish plot involves sucking Garth Pig right into the bell of her sousaphone in the middle of the concert (presumably the better to store him for a post-concert supper, my dear), but quick-witted William Pig saves his brother's bacon; he seizes the conductor's baton and directs the brassy wolf in a solo oom-pah-pah which forcibly ejects Garth, sending him flying to center stage in a well-received star turn while the sousaphone player flees in disappointed hunger. Rayner sets the situation clearly and carefully, and kids will get their usual kick out of spotting the wolf (who lurks behind her instrument with comic ominousness) long before the pigs do. The pig family, pictured in airy line-and-watercolor with abundant white space, are stylish down to their perky tails in their concert garb (although Father Pig tends towards five o'clock shadow), and there's something about the high-heeled effect of cloven hooves that thrusts out porky derrieres in a particularly droll fashion. Young musicians will wish their concerts were as interesting as this, but Rayner's perky production will please the piglets. DS

RHEE, NAMI, ad. *Magic Spring: A Korean Folktale*; ad. and illus. by Nami Rhee. Whitebird/Putnam, 1993 32p
ISBN 0-399-22420-3 \$14.95 R 4-6 yrs

With a confident simplicity that never becomes condescending in either brushstrokes or narration, Rhee passes on a story told to her as a child, about the way a hard-working old couple become young again and find a child of their own. The water of life, which the old man discovers with the help of a bird, rejuvenates first him, then his wife, and finally the rich neighbor who has taunted them. But the greedy neighbor drinks too much, turning into a baby whom the couple adopts. It's a happy ending that twists neatly into a new beginning for everyone, and Rhee's strong ink outlines emphasize the strong lines of the story, just as her restrained watercolors highlight the understated compositions without becoming distracting. Korean written characters form a decorative line that bridges pictures and text. Of the several Korean folktales recently published in picture book format (see Climo, Han, and O'Brien in this issue), this is the most centered and the most accessible to young children. BH

ROCHMAN, HAZEL, comp. ed. *Who Do You Think You Are?: Stories of Friends and Enemies*; compiled and edited by Hazel Rochman and Darlene Z. McCampbell. Joy Street, 1993 170p
ISBN 0-316-75355-6 \$15.95 R Gr. 9-12

Sixteen stories, all fairly contemporary and focused on youth, address the delicate

and dangerous art of involvement with another, whether as friend or foe. A friend can be a dog (Martha Brooks' "A Boy and His Dog"); a friend can be another's enemy (a selection from Tobias Wolff's *This Boy's Life*); he can lure you into destruction (Joyce Carol Oates' "Where Are You Going? Where Have You Been?"), or she can reach across a generation to introduce you to the world (an excerpt from Maya Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*). Enemies, with whom the obsession and absorption can be as great or greater, populate these pages too (appearing, for instance, in Isabel Huggan's "Celia Behind Me" and a pair of gritty Tim O'Brien pieces about Vietnam). Although the majority of the stories end in sorrow, there's a pleasing variety in style, ranging from Gish Jen's lively and bubbling "What Means Switch" to Carson McCullers' colloquial and direct "Sucker." This is a thoughtful collection that kids can peruse one story at a time or in toto; either way, they should appreciate the exposure to some sensitive reflections, good storytelling, and excellent writing. Biographical notes on the authors are included. DS

SACHS, MARILYN *Thirteen Going on Seven*. Dutton, 1993 [112p]

ISBN 0-525-45096-3 \$12.99

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 4-7

Dee is sophisticated, smart, and yearning for adolescence; Dezzy, her far-from-identical twin, flounders at school, resents her blossoming body, and yearns to stay even with Dee in what both twins clearly regard as a race for attention and significance ("If Dee grew taller than Dezzy, didn't that also mean Dezzy grew shorter than Dee? And if Dee ran faster and climbed higher, didn't that also mean that Dezzy ran slower and climbed lower?"). This is mainly Dezzy's story of the year in which she begins to find her own identity. She becomes close to her newly-widowed grandfather (he drives along after her to keep her safe when she goes for her daily jog in the Golden Gate Park), she makes friends with a boy her age (who avoids jogging with his critical father by riding in the car with Dezzy's grandfather), and she develops an interest in what her science teacher terms "waste management" (she picks up garbage). The emotional and honest heroine is a sympathetic figure, and her sibling rivalry will ring a lot of familiar bells with readers. The story, with its straightforward, friendly tone and gentle humor, hearkens back to early Sachs such as *Amy Moves In* (BCCB 9/64), and it's nice to have a book not dependent on obvious crisis or denouement—Dezzy doesn't so much come into her own as settle more firmly into being the girl she's always been. The quiet self-definition theme is reminiscent of Susan Shreve's *Wait for Me* (BCCB 10/92), but this will also appeal to older readers who will appreciate a tender tale of confidence-building. DS

SAN SOUCI, ROBERT D., ad. *Cut From the Same Cloth: American Women of Myth, Legend, and Tall Tale*; illus. by Brian Pinkney. Philomel, 1993 [160p]

ISBN 0-399-21987-0 \$17.95

Reviewed from galleys

R* Gr. 4-6

Grouped by region—Northeast, South, Midwest, Southwest, and West—these fifteen stories offer a satisfying balance to the male-dominated tall tale figures so familiar from books such as Paul Robert Walker's *Big Men, Big Country* (reviewed below). There's also a good ethnic mix here: six of the heroines are Native American, four African American, two Anglo American, one Mexican American, and one Hawaiian. If any particular characteristic seems to distinguish these

superhumans from their male counterparts, it's the fact that the women's deeds tend to be less staggering than haunting. The Miwok legend of Hekeke, for instance, in which Hekeke is kidnapped by a cannibalistic giant and must watch him consume his victims until she destroys him, has a tone more reminiscent of Odysseus' experience in the cave of the Cyclops than of any Paul Bunyan-type feats. Otoonah's determined survival after being abandoned on an island by her brothers during a period of starvation is as adventurous a quest as you'll find anywhere. Others, such as "Molly Cottontail," are lighter-hearted or, like "Sweet Betsey from Pike," sharp-edged. San Souci has varied his retellings to suit the style of each story, and his introductions, source notes, and bibliography are commendably thorough. Brian Pinkney's signature scratchboard illustrations, one of which introduces each tale, are particularly well tuned to the heroic mode. This is a first-class resource for school media centers where students work with tall tales, or for public libraries where parents and professionals read folklore aloud and do storytelling. BH

SATTLER, HELEN RONEY *The Earliest Americans*; illus. by Jean Day Zallinger. Clarion, 1993 126p

ISBN 0-395-54996-5 \$16.95

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 5-8

Explaining the unknown and the complex to children is a difficult task for adults. Often we oversimplify; occasionally we over-elucidate. Helen Sattler's beautiful book falls victim to the latter problem. The complicated business about who knows when and how America was first settled and what evidence there is to substantiate the theories is not made easier to understand here. The constant overlapping of dates and references to multiple conflicting views about what might have happened requires, at the very least, some prior knowledge of the migration process and the methods by which information is verified in this field of science. These chapters read as if they were written from notes without a synthesis of thought. Zallinger's illustrations, while elegantly conceived, are occasionally mismatched to the text (microblades, cores, and bifacially flaked projectiles are shown on page 20 but not addressed in the text until page 24). In addition, the sense of reality created by the well-crafted scenes of Paleo-Indian life and presented without comment either in text or caption may be misleading since we know so little of these peoples' dress and habits. On the other hand, labelled pictures such as a display of "sinodonty, the tooth pattern that only Native Americans and northern Asians share," will lure kids into reading the text above it. Later chapters give brief overviews of a number of the better documented cultures without an overwhelming amount of detail. Although the book does not always give a clear representation of the overall picture and therefore does not stand well on its own, it could help children piece together a fuller understanding of the distant past and our knowledge of it. The time chart, extensive bibliography, and index are exemplary; students researching particular aspects of settlement and migration will have easy access to their subject. CAROL FOX

SERVICE, PAMELA F. *Stinker's Return*. Scribner's, 1993 87p

ISBN 0-684-19542-9 \$12.95

R Gr. 4-6

Karen and Jonathan still haven't gotten over their encounter with the alien-turned-skunk who wreaked havoc in *Stinker from Space* (BCCB 3/88), especially since the government covered up the incident and made them look like liars. Now Tsynq

Yr's back to include the kids on another mission, and the Feds are after them all. This is basically an extended chase scene, by spacecraft, auto, and even on foot through the White House (including a *very* brief encounter with the president and his dog). Via a neat twisting of plot, the kids get what they wanted and more than they dreamed: their story is vindicated, not to mention photographed, by the press; their hero, the lead actor in *Star Raiders*, helps save them; and they get a little spin into space ("Let's boldly go where no humans and darn few skunks have gone before!"). There's plenty of room for another sequel, which is all to the good—the story is fast-moving and lots of fun, just the right prescription for science fiction fans or reluctant readers of any persuasion. BH

SINGER, MARILYN *It's Hard to Read a Map with a Beagle on Your Lap*; illus. by Clément Oubrière. Holt, 1993 32p
ISBN 0-8050-2201-5 \$15.95 Ad Gr. 2-4

This is a collection of twenty-six silly dog poems ranging in length and format from the title couplet to longer poems about particular breeds or canine habits ("Dogs . . . like to sleep on sofas/ Instead of on the floor/ They like to crawl in bed with you/ And then they like to snore"), plus a few lickety-split paeans to "Ears," "Tails," and "Fur." The poems are entertaining, although most of them seem driven by rhyme rather than a guiding idea, and the rhythm is sometimes forced. Oubrière's scratchy lines and mixed-media art emphasizes the variety in both dogs and poetry by depicting the protagonists sometimes in cartoonish exaggeration and sometimes in highly detailed realism, ranging from full-page bleeds—or, in the case of the dachshund, four full pages—to a tiny Mexican Hairless adrift in white space. The effect, coupled with interestingly varied type arrangements (circles, snakes, and so on) and a continuing rhyme that unfolds in the upper-right-hand corner throughout the book, can be visually overwhelming, although it's always energetic. Kids won't exactly take these up as chants, but the tilted investigation of the doggy world has a giggle-provoking appeal. DS

SIS, PETER *Komodo!*; written and illus. by Peter Sis. Greenwillow, 1993 [34p]
Library ed. ISBN 0-688-11584-5 \$14.93
Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-11583-7 \$15.00
Reviewed from galleys R* 5-8 yrs

The androgynous young narrator of this book is fascinated by dragons of all kinds, so s/he is thrilled when Mom and Dad decide they'll all take a trip to Komodo in Indonesia to see the Komodo Dragon. After a long trip, the narrator and family arrive at the island only to find it disappointingly crowded (litter-flinging tourists huddle around in a ring waiting to see the "Dragon Show"), but the young dragon-lover wanders away and has a brief private encounter with a wild Komodo. The story, assisted by the art in its moodily surreal tone, is simply written but implies worlds, and not just about Komodo Dragons (information about which is discreetly inserted in an illustration and an endnote, both relevant but neither mandatory to the story's enjoyment). Sis' illustrations are what really bring allure to the story; his delicate stipple and hatch faux-engraving pairs with the dappled verdancy of the watercolors to create a lushly precise view of the world. Visual treats await the patient observer, including a couple of *Where's Waldo*-like pages in which the narrator is subsumed into a crowd, and the constant repetition of dragon figures in places both realistic (the narrator's wallpaper and curtains) and fantastic

(the foliage on Komodo suggests dragons in no uncertain terms). The subject's a little off the beaten path, and that's part of what the story's about—young readers will be lured by this tale of obsession, adventure, and the magic of private experience. DS

THESMAN, JEAN *Molly Donnelly*. Houghton, 1993 186p
ISBN 0-395-64348-1 \$13.95

Ad Gr. 7-10

Heading each chapter with an excerpt from Molly Donnelly's wartime diary—December 7, 1941, to August, 1945—the author focuses on the maturation of a Seattle teenager who sees her best friend taken off to an internment camp, copes with an increasingly fragmented family life, gets bored with the boy she has a crush on, falls deeply in love with a soldier, discovers her vocation as a writer, determines to go to college, and grieves over her cousin, an army nurse killed in a Japanese camp. All of these experiences are realistically detailed, but reality has a tendency to ramble, and so does the story. Despite some intense scenes, this has more portrayal than plot. Nevertheless, the home-front is well realized without becoming informationally forced. Each clearly rendered character collects a reader's interest: Molly's depressive father, sliding into alcoholism; her mother, escaping into a first job; her brother, running wild toward juvenile delinquency; and her uncle, on whom she relies when the others consistently fail her. Not as forcefully shaped of *The Rain Catchers* (BCCB 3/91), this nevertheless affirms Thesman's skill in revealing human dynamics. BH

TURNER, ANN *Grass Songs*; illus. by Barry Moser. Harcourt, 1993 54p
Trade ed. ISBN 0-15-136788-4 \$16.95
Paper ed. ISBN 0-15-636477-8 \$10.95

R* Gr. 8 up

"All day, since first light/ we had been traveling./ Not a bird, nothing furred,/ just rock and shadow/ and a light that made the stones/ look bloody." This stanza from "Stones Speak" represents the voice of a pioneer woman, one of seventeen portrayed in these narrative poems based on letters, diaries, and historical anecdotes of the harsh westward journey. Some rejoice in their newfound freedom from the restriction of traditional roles, others yearn for the familiar comforts of their old homes. Some give birth along the way, and others die. Turner's free verse flows easily, with internal rhymes that turn a corner in sound, inviting readers to share these aloud—a particularly appropriate idea for American history classes. On the other hand, the subjects are often private, even intimate: an Indian captive recaptured by whites longs to return to her Native American family; a woman's joyful response to her husband's sexuality will lead, she realizes, to one child too many; women delight in what they have or long for what they have not. Turner has matched the intensity of their struggle with a poetic intensity of her own, spare and plainspoken. Moser's pencil drawings, based on historical photographs and especially eloquent in depicting the characters' eyes, echo Turner's verbal portraits with concentrated expression. BH

VYNER, SUE *Arctic Spring*; illus. by Tim Vyner. Viking, 1993 32p
ISBN 0-670-84934-0 \$13.99

Ad 5-8 yrs

Like Matthews' *Arctic Summer*, reviewed above, this is a catalogish display of the animals that inhabit the region, here illustrated with snowy-green tempera paintings notable both for their sense of the Arctic and for the fine detailing of the

animals. There's a bit of a narrative here, some of it confusing: it's not apparent until well into the story that the polar bear introduced on the first page is adrift on a piece of sea ice where she has constructed her winter cave. Still, this is a simple introduction to an exotic ecosystem where land and sea habitats are bridged by ice. RS

WALKER, PAUL ROBERT *Big Men, Big Country: A Collection of American Tall Tales*; illus. by James Bernardin. Harcourt, 1993 [80p]

ISBN 0-15-207136-9 \$16.95

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 4-6

Walker's informal style and easygoing humor make a natural fit for these nine stories of larger-than-life heroes, and he's done a thorough job of researching the background for them and telling us about it. A note at the end of each gives the oral and/or publishing history for the story, while an annotated bibliography will help readers look further into the tall tale of their choice. Although the selection is traditional, Walker has varied it, with some figures well-known and others less so: Davy Crockett, Old Stormalong, Big Mose, John Darling, Ol' Gabe (Jim Bridger), Paul Bunyan, John Henry, Gib Morgan, and Pecos Bill. Bernardin has captured this cast with strong black-and-white drawings, plus full-color pictures with a kind of muscular Frederic Remington energy. In fact, this is such a down-home masculine collection that you should be sure to order San Souci's *Cut From the Same Cloth: American Women of Myth, Legend, and Tall Tale* (reviewed above) just to maintain a little balance in the library. BH

WALKER, KATE *Peter*. Houghton, 1993 170p

ISBN 0-395-64722-3 \$13.95

R Gr. 7-10

In this Australian import *Peter*, fifteen, is intrigued with his older brother Vince's friend David, who is self-assured, good-looking, and gay. Gossip starts one day when David is helping Peter out with the grocery shopping; the excursion makes Peter the perfect target for the beastie boys who, along with Peter, rev their motorbikes around a deserted paddock. Unlike many YA novels that start out about homosexuality and end up being about tolerance or "phases," this one has Peter confront the possibility, even the likelihood, of his being gay. There's one especially funny/sad scene where Peter, attempting to test his preferences, buys a gay skin magazine and peruses it in a men's room stall, and then tries to flush the magazine away: "it was going to seize up the city's plumbing and I'd be to blame. It'd be all my fault, because I was gay." While the most engaging relationship here is actually between Peter and Vince, a pain-in-the-neck older brother who cares deeply for Peter, the sparks between Peter and David fly sexy, even though David gently—and wisely—rejects Peter's timid overture. Occasional preaching, especially via the macho posturing of the motorbikers and Peter's father, is overdone, but the dialogue is perfectly tuned and Peter's narration, both scrappy and pleading, is freshly voiced. RS

WEISS, ANN E. *Money Games: The Business of Sports*. Houghton, 1993 186p

ISBN 0-395-57444-7 \$14.95

R Gr. 9-12

While covering the same sports issues as Aaseng's *The Locker Room Mirror*, reviewed above, Weiss' book is a carefully argued exposé, building a case that such problems such as drug use, cheating, and violence can be traced to the enormous sums of money involved in both amateur and professional competition. Where

Aaseng states that "sports authorities must continue to search for realistic ways to discourage drug abuse among participants," for example, Weiss casts a gimlet eye upon the intentions of the executives who would provide help via such methods as drug testing: "testing's true goal [state critics]—like the goal of sports drug policies overall—is a public relations one: convincing ticket-buying and television-viewing fans that sport's drug problem is under control." Weiss much more than Aaseng focuses upon the big business of sports, and builds a convincing case that management is far more responsible than individual players for the problems in the game. Lots of statistics (and each chapter has an extensive bibliography) add evidential weight, and while Weiss' book is more difficult to read than Aaseng's, it avoids his summary and sometimes superficial tone and benefits from a dedicated muckraking idealism. An index will be appended. RS

WOOD, AUDREY *Rude Giants*; written and illus. by Audrey Wood. Harcourt, 1993 [32p]

ISBN 0-15-269412-9 \$13.95

Reviewed from galleys

Ad 4-8 yrs

A slovenly and mannerless giant and giantess move into the castle on the hill and terrorize the local folk until the giants snatch Beatrix the butter maid's cow Gerda. Beatrix stops the meal not once but three times by claiming the cow will taste even more delicious if the giants clean their castle, improve their manners, and submit to a complete hair and wardrobe makeover. The town celebrates with a weekly potluck party, and when a rude giant baby is born Beatrix and Gerda are hired as tutors. Kids won't mind the obvious message on civilized behavior; they'll be too busy enjoying the exaggerated close-ups of hairy fists, triple chins, and stringy green hair and the double-page spreads full of giant clutter and bad taste. Even cleaned up, the giants are more than a bit garish, but the dialogue is snappy and swift paced, just right for pre-school storytime. The plot and characters may seem contrived to adults, but their young listeners will plead "read it again!" ELIZABETH HUNTOON

WRIGHT, BETTY REN *The Ghost of Popcorn Hill*; illus. by Karen Ritz. Holiday House, 1993 81p

ISBN 0-8234-1009-9 \$13.95

R Gr. 3-6

Martin and Peter like their new house, really a rustic old cabin, on Popcorn Hill, and they're thrilled that it means they can get a dog. The brothers want "the biggest dog in the world," but their father puts his foot down and instead they acquire medium-sized Rosie, whom Martin and Peter avoid in favor of a huge Old English Sheepdog who hangs around the cabin. More of a problem is spectral laughter in their room at night, which turns out to emanate from the ghost of old Tom Buffle, who used to live in the cabin and who's been terribly lonely since he died. While they don't bear harmless old Tom any ill-will, he is scary and makes Peter cry; it turns out, however, that the boys' desired sheepdog is a ghost too, so they bring Tom and the ghost dog together to the satisfaction of everybody, and they decide that Rosie's a pretty good dog in her own way ("And you can't see through her," Peter says matter-of-factly). This is a nice friendly ghost story, tidily plotted and unthreatening enough (without being a joke story) for spook fans with weak nerves. The big print, large page-size, and frequency of full-page pencil illustrations (which feature homey, big-eared boys and dogs) should make the book an inviting read for kids uneasy about pages full of print. DS

PROFESSIONAL CONNECTIONS

Announcement: With this June issue, we begin to incorporate periodic editorial contributions from our Advisory Board members, who will be writing Professional Connections columns in their specialty areas, as well as occasional reviews. Their names will be used in full (Elizabeth Huntoon and Carol Fox this month, for instance) rather than indicated by initials, as staff writers' are.

Professional reading:

Compiled by Carol Elbert, Rene Lynch, and Robin Currie, *Double Rainbows: More Storytimes about Things Kids Like*, is a collection of eighteen story hour suggestions organized around themes such as bathtime, bedtime, monsters, and magic wishes. Each section includes a lengthy bibliography of picture books, a fingerplay, and a simple craft project. The sixty-six page booklet (unbound, punched for a standard three-ring binder) is available for \$7.00 postpaid from the Iowa Library Association, 823 Insurance Exchange Building, Des Moines, IA 50309

Many Faces, Many Voices: Multicultural Literary Experiences for Youth is a collection of presentations given at Kent State University's annual Virginia Hamilton Conference. Edited by Anthony L. Manna and Carolyn S. Brodie, the contents include papers by Virginia Hamilton, Arlene Harris Mitchell, and Nicholasa Mohr, among others; topics covered include the depiction of Appalachia in books for children, books about the Jewish-American experience, and African-American poetry and folklore. A "Selected Listing of Multicultural Trade Books for Children and Young Adults" and a directory of "Sources of Multicultural Materials" are appended (Highsmith Press, ISBN 0-917846-12-5, 183p, paper ed \$29.00).

Edited by Judy Taylor, *"So I Shall Tell You a Story . . .": Encounters with Beatrix Potter* is a collection of essays relating the experiences of those who met the often prickly Mrs. Heelis ("When a person has been nearly thirty years married it's not ingratiating to get an envelope addressed to 'Miss'"), as well as contemporary views on Potter's work by writers such as Brian Alderson and Maurice Sendak. Rosemary Wells' "Sitting in Her Chair" is a standout contribution, a detailed response of an artist to Potter's craft and technique (Warne, ISBN 0-7232-4025-6, 224p, \$22.00).

Earthsea Revisioned, a lecture originally delivered at a Children's Literature New England conference by Ursula K. Le Guin, is now available in an elegant 28-page pamphlet format. Copies are \$10.00; order from Children's Literature New England, c/o Norwood G. Long, 334 Woodland Road, Madison, NJ, 07940.

A third edition of *Fiction for Youth: A Guide to Recommended Books*, compiled by Lillian L. Shapiro and Barbara L. Stein, annotates more than six hundred young adult and adult titles of interest to teen readers (Neal-Schuman Publishers, ISBN 1-55570-113-2, 263p, paper ed. \$35.00).

SUBJECT AND USE INDEX

Keyed to *The Bulletin's* alphabetical arrangement by author, this new index, which will appear in each issue, can be used in three ways. Entries in regular type refer to subjects; entries in **bold type** refer to curricular or other uses; entries in ALL-CAPS refer to genres and appeals. In no way meant to be a cataloging aid, this rather idiosyncratic index is instead intended to lead readers to those books that could fill a particular gap in a collection, to help teachers and librarians find books that might be useful in various school or recreational settings, and to help in those requests for a "love story" or a "scary story." In the case of subject headings, the subhead "stories" refers to books for the readaloud audience; "fiction," to those books intended for independent reading.

Adoption: Gravelle
ADVENTURE STORIES: Cross;
 Mikaelson
 Africa, West-folklore: Maddern
 African Americans-fiction: Boyd;
 Johnson
 African Americans-stories: Falwell
 Archeology: Sattler
 Archeology-fiction: Carris
 Arctic regions: Matthews; Vyner
 Arizona-fiction: DeVito
Art: Lewin
 Australia-fiction: Walker, K.
 Aviation-fiction: Mikaelson
 Balloons-fiction: O'Donnell
 Baseball: Gutman
BEDTIME STORIES: Caseley
 Birds: McMillan
 Birds-stories: McDermott
 Brothers and sisters-fiction:
 DeVito
 Brothers and sisters-stories:
 Caseley
 Brothers-fiction: Walker, K.
 Brothers-stories: Bernhard
 Bullies-fiction: Murrow
 Chinese Americans-fiction: Levitin
 Cliques-fiction: Harris
Columbus Day: Crespo
 Comedians-fiction: Deaver
COUNTING BOOKS: Falwell
 Death-fiction: Deaver
 Dogs-poetry: Singer
 Dogs-stories: Wright

Ecology: Lavies
 Elephants-fiction: Cross
 England-fiction: Hendry; Pullman
Ethics and values: Weiss
FAIRYTALES AND FOLKLORE:
 Bernhard; Birdseye; Climo;
 Compton; Crespo; Han;
 Maddern; Martin; Mathews;
 McDermott; O'Brien; Rhee;
 San Souci; Walker, P.
FANTASY: Ahlberg; Askounis;
 Banks; O'Donnell; Osborne
 Farm life-fiction: Lawlor
 Fathers and sons-fiction:
 Mikaelson
 Foster children-fiction: Griffin
 Friends-fiction: Bridgers;
 Rochman
FUNNY STORIES: Service
GHOST STORIES: Wright
 Giants-stories: Compton; : Wood
 Grandmothers-fiction: Johnson
 Grandfathers-fiction: Carris
Guidance: Gravelle
 Gypsies-fiction: Askounis
Health: Gay
HISTORICAL FICTION: Choi;
 Cross; Hendry; Lawlor;
 Thesman
History, American: Sattler
History, U. S.: Cross; Lawlor;
 Thesman; Turner
 Homelessness-stories: Goble

Homosexuality-fiction: Murrow;
 Walker, K.
 Identity-fiction: Ada; Sachs
 Insects-fiction: Osborne
 Jews-fiction: Levitin
 Korea-folklore: Climo; Han;
 O'Brien; Rhee
 Korea-fiction: Choi
 Latinos-fiction: Ada; Mikaelson
 Libraries-stories: Caseley
 Lizards-stories: Sis
LOVE STORIES: Hendry
 Maine: McMillan
 Mexico-fiction: Mikaelson
 Mothers and daughters-fiction:
 DeVito
 Mountain climbing: Kramer
 Music and musicians-stories:
 Rayner
MYSTERY STORIES: Carris;
 McGraw; Osborne; Pullman
 Native Americans: Sattler
 Native Americans-folklore:
 Bernhard; Crespo; Goble;
 Gregg; Martin; McDermott
Nature study: Dewey; Lavies;
 Matthews; McMillan; Michel;
 Vyner
 Pet care: Landau
 Pigs-stories: Rayner
 Pioneer life-poetry: Turner
POETRY: Cassidy; Singer; Turner
 Prejudice: Langone
 Prejudice-fiction: Murrow
Reading aloud: Ahlberg; Cassidy;
 O'Donnell; San Souci; Turner;
 Walker, P.
Reading, easy: Ada; Kramer;
 Wright
Reading, family: Falwell
Reading, reluctant: Mikaelson;
 Service
 Refugees-fiction: Choi
Safety education: Landau
SCHOOL STORIES: Harris
 School-fiction: Ada; Boyd;
 Bridgers
SCIENCE FICTION: Harris;
 Lawrence; Service
 Seals-stories: Martin

SHORT STORIES: Rochman
 Sisters-fiction: Hendry; Sachs;
 Mathews
 Soccer-fiction: Murrow
Social issues: Aaseng; Gay; Kermit;
 Langone; Weiss
 Spiders: Dewey
 Sports: Aaseng; Gutman; Lewin;
 Weiss
 Stepparents-fiction: Boyd;
 McGraw
Story hour: Bernhard; Birdseye;
 Caseley; Climo; Compton;
 Falwell; Goble; Gregg; Han;
 Kermit; McDermott; Maddern;
 Mathews; O'Brien; Rayner;
 Rhee; San Souci; Sis; Walker,
 P.; Wood
 Television-fiction: Deaver
 Texas-fiction: Griffin
 Time travel-fiction: Griffin
 Toys: Morris
 Toys-fiction: Ahlberg; Banks
 Travel-stories: Sis
 Twins-fiction: Sachs
 United Nations: Kermit
 United States-folklore: Birdseye;
 Compton; San Souci; Walker,
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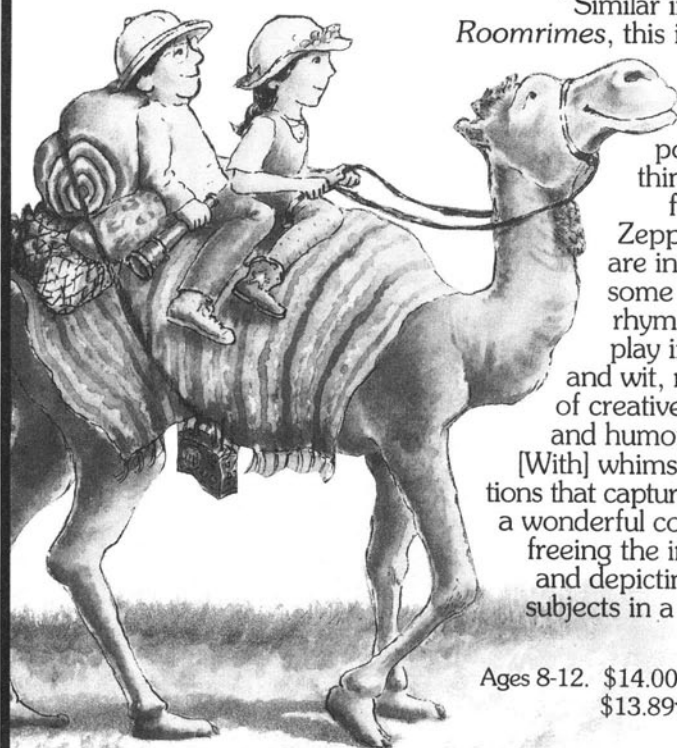
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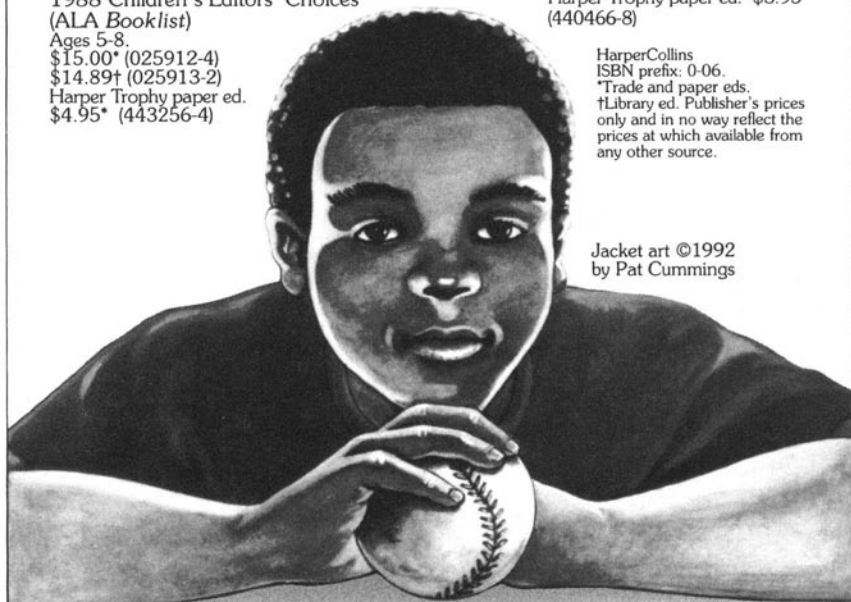
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